

Economic Development

Goal ED-1: Ensure vibrant and distinctive downtown, commercial, and village centers

Objectives:

1. Encourage business and job growth in urban and commercial/industrial centers (e.g., downtown, village centers, and targeted commercial and industrial zones).
2. Improve physical access to commercial centers.
3. Provide adequate transportation and parking options to enable successful visits to these centers.
4. Preserve/enhance the public services and amenities that draw people downtown and ensure that they are safe, pedestrian friendly, and welcoming to the diversity of Northampton residents.

Business Improvement District

A Downtown Steering Committee, led by a group of downtown businesses and property owners, is working to develop a Downtown Northampton Business Improvement District (BID). Through self-imposed fees, property owners in a BID collectively invest in a broad range of programs and services to give the downtown a competitive edge in the marketplace. BIDs provide services that supplement the services provided by the City. The BID will be a partnership between private property owners, institutions and non-profits, and the City with the goal of generating greater profitability through cooperation than any individual property owner can accomplish alone. The proposed BID will provide a comprehensive package of supplemental programs and services that will allow Northampton to expand its prominence as the region's preeminent college town and cultural/dining destination.

- Maintenance, landscaping, and beautification
- Marketing, events, and public relations
- Public safety and addressing social needs
- Parking and transportation

Strategies and Actions:

(P) Support infill development in downtown and commercial/industrial zones:

- Provide regulations and financial incentives that would encourage conversion of public and private surface parking lots to mixed development with parking structures,
- Allow taller structures [>five stories];
- Encourage or require shared parking to meet zoning requirements.

Responsible Agencies: Planning Board, Office of Planning and Development, Economic Development

(P) Monitor and seek solutions to social problems affecting business environment in downtown, particularly panhandling and drug use.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor, City Council, Police Department, Social Services Agencies

(P) Provide road and transit improvements to support business development in areas identified for commercial and mixed-use growth. See Transportation Section for details.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor, Economic Development, City Council, Public Works, Transportation and Parking, Office of Planning and Development

(P) Develop a mechanism to support downtown management, marketing, and maintenance such as a Business Improvement District and develop revenue sources for marketing.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor, Economic Development, Local businesses, property owners

Reinvigorate the retail sector:

- Monitor retail sales trends, occupancy, and turnover rates
- Investigate and implement options to create and monitor affordable commercial space
- Develop a marketing strategy to reposition downtown as a retail hub and grow market share



Responsible Agencies: Economic Development, Planning Department, Chamber of Commerce

Encourage placement of State regional facilities, such as courts and State offices, in the City especially downtown.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor, Economic Development, Planning Department

Investigate the feasibility and pursue the development of a year-round public market for agricultural, arts, crafts, and locally made products.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, artists, farmers, local producers.

Measurements of Progress:

Jobs

Metric: Number of jobs with living wages associated with commercial development city/village centers, and existing employers

Reporting Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Office of Planning and Development

Target: Increase in jobs with wages matching local living standards

Responsibility for Target: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, Local businesses

Commercial Activity

Metric: Building permits issued for new commercial development consistent with the Future Land Use Map

Reporting Agencies: Building Department, Office of Planning and Development

Target: Increase in commercial activity commensurate with regional economic growth

Responsibility for Target: Planning Board, Mayor's Office of Economic Development

Goal ED-2: Provide long-term economic sustainability, security, and opportunity

Objectives:

1. Preserve and expand the commercial and industrial land inventory and the commercial/industrial tax base.
2. Encourage and support sustainable business development and practices.
3. Encourage a versatile, diverse, and sustainable business and employment base.
4. Encourage business development for job creation and retention, and living wages that support the cost of living in the City.

Strategies and Actions:

Sector support

(P) Reinvigorate the manufacturing base – both traditional (plastics, machining) and higher technology. Determine what regional and state-wide resources can be used to support manufacturing and provide information to manufacturers. Actively seek state funds for workplace, language, and skills training in the workplace.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, regional employment board workforce training and skills development organizations

(P) Develop key existing and emerging industry sectors with growth potential that build on Northampton's strengths including: publishing, software, medical/science/bio technology, higher education, advanced technology manufacturing, creative economy, green businesses, and tourism/retail.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, City Council, Planning Board

(P) Use the Capital Improvement program to specify the plan for building public infrastructure needed to support business development in areas targeted for business growth (broadband, sewer, water, drainage, transit, roadway, and parking).

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Mayor, Capital Improvement Committee, Board of Public Works

Re-establish the Business Outreach and Retention Program to visit businesses in each sector on a regular basis.

Local Institutions

The following are considered the key local educational and health-related institutions: Cooley-Dickinson Hospital, Smith College, Smith Agricultural School, and the V.A. Hospital.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, City Council Economic Development & Housing Committee, Western MA Economic Development Council.

Promote greater participation by local businesses in the Regional Employment Board and Career Center leadership roles, programs, and activities.

Responsibility: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, Regional Employment Board, Career Center, businesses

Institutions and non-profits

(P) Support institutional and non-profit businesses that are major employers, provide livable wages, provide important public benefit, and act as a catalyst for secondary economic activity (e.g., education, health care, Fairgrounds, and cultural organizations).

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Schools, Institutions, Chamber of Commerce, Office of Planning and Development

Create business and educational collaborations and support innovation and technology transfer and commercialization to grow local businesses and to retain creativity, entrepreneurship, and educated workforce from colleges and vocational schools in the region.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Schools, Local Institutions, Chamber of Commerce

Create collaborations with colleges to market Northampton as an attractive place to locate alumni businesses and to develop long-term strategies for shared economic benefits.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Schools, Local Institutions, Chamber of Commerce

Sustainable business development

(P) Support business development and business practices that enhance the environmental and long-term sustainability of the community including, but not limited to, agriculture and other land-based business, green business, energy efficiency, and climate protection.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, Planning Board, Energy Officer

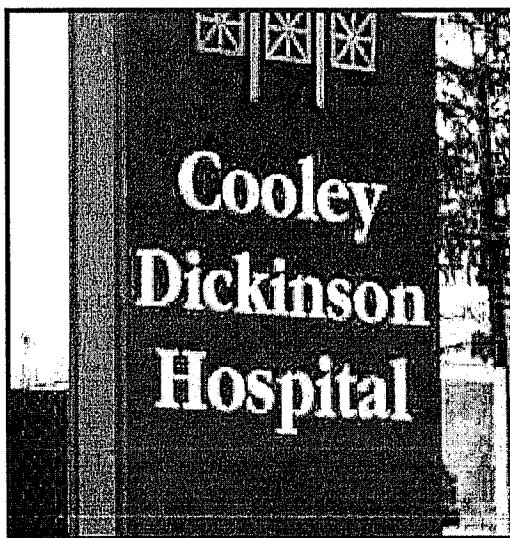
(P) Balance local and regional trade with export trade to generate and equitably circulate new wealth coming into the community.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, Local businesses

(P) Focus on business development that supports job creation, job opportunities, and higher than average wages for all Northampton residents.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, City Council, Planning Board, Office of Planning and Development

(P) Focus on retaining and growing existing businesses and jobs. Develop a marketing campaign to attract compatible and desirable businesses and increase visibility for Northampton in regional and national markets, highlight quality of life assets as a competitive advantage.



CISA selected Cooley-Dickinson Hospital to receive its prestigious Local Hero Award for 2007 for their efforts over the past two years to provide healthy, freshly prepared food in its café as well as to in-patients using local farm products. Cooley-Dickinson performed a cost-benefit analysis and reports that buying locally grown food directly from farmers can be cost-effective for large institutions.

Responsible Agencies: Chamber of Commerce, Mayor's Office of Economic Development

(P) Seek opportunities to ensure that commercial and industrial property in the City remains affordable to a diverse range of businesses.

Responsible Agencies: Economic Development, Planning Department

Research and provide model sustainable business practices as a resource for the business community.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, Energy Officer, Office of Planning & Development, Department of Public Works

Support entrepreneurship with business and financial assistance and targeted financial incentives where appropriate.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Mayor, City Council

Encourage and support locally owned and operated businesses and "buy local" campaigns.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, Local businesses

Training

(P) Provide entrepreneurial training and start-up business assistance, especially for low-income and limited English speaking residents.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, School Department, Adult Basic Education (ABE) Programs, Regional Employment Board, Valley Community Development Corporation

(P) Address ESL, literacy, adult basic education, and social equity needs of the workforce, especially immigrant workers, and provide programs in community and workplace locations.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, School Department, Institutions, ABE Programs, Regional Employment Board

Support workforce development and training that is responsive to industry and worker trends and needs to ensure competitiveness in the regional and global economy, economic security/adaptability under changing eco-

nomic conditions, career advancement, and secure standard of living/living wages.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, School Department, Institutions, Regional Employment Board

Support job creation, job training and career ladder opportunities for youth, unemployed, under-employed, under-educated and limited English speakers.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, School Department, Smith Vocational, Institutions, Regional Employment Board, Casa Latina, Center for New Americans, ESOL and adult literacy programs

Land Inventory and Tax Base

(P) Develop key parcels to create a range of available sites and projects (e.g., Northampton State Hospital, Rt. 10 Business Park, King Street).

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Planning Board, Office of Planning and Development

(P) Support cleanup and redevelopment of brownfield sites and underutilized commercial/ industrial buildings including, Wire Works, Magnat, Cutlery, Pro Corp., Hill & Dale Mall, and Three County Fairground.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Planning Board, property owners, Office of Planning and Development

(P) Prevent loss of commercial/industrial land from rezoning to residential use. Exclude residential uses, in industrial districts to prevent conflicting land uses and to maximize industrial inventory, but task the Rezoning Committee to consider exclusions and special circumstances.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor, Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Office of Planning & Development, Planning Board, City Council.

Update and expand the Urban Renewal Plan to authorize the Northampton Redevelopment Authority or other public development entity to undertake development projects in targeted industrial and commercial areas including but not limited to King Street, the Rt. 10 Business Park, and downtown

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, City Council, Office of Planning and Development

Measurements of Progress:

Tax Base

Metric: Increase in the tax base

Reporting Agencies: Finance Director, Mayor, Mayor's Office of Economic Development

Target: Yearly increases up to 2.5% plus new growth, as permitted by State law.

Responsibility for Target: Mayor, City Council, Finance Director, Mayor's Office of Economic Development

Business Activity

Metric: Number of businesses; Number of jobs and wages; Turnover rate for local businesses

Reporting Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, State and Federal databases

Target: Increase value of businesses by number of jobs, wages and property valuation

Responsibility for Target: Local businesses, Mayor's Office of Economic Development

Training Activity

Metric: Number of individuals enrolled and graduating in business and job training programs courses or assistance programs

Reporting Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, School Department, Local Institutions, Job Training Programs



Target: Increase commensurate with regional economic growth

Responsibility for Target: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, School Committee, Institutions, Regional Employment Board

Goal ED-3: Support a thriving cultural and creative economy

Objectives:

1. Increase the availability of affordable studio, live-work, performance, and rehearsal space to retain artists, cultural organizations, and businesses in Northampton.
2. Develop cross connections between various sectors within the creative economy, such as artists, designers, museums, and new technologies, to strengthen the overall vitality.
3. Facilitate greater communication and collaboration among cultural organizations, artists, the business community, non-profit organizations and City government.

Strategies and Actions:

(P) Preserve and develop affordable arts and performance venues in the City by:

- Creating an inventory of present spaces, evaluating their long-term viability.
- Surveying local artists to determine demand and ability to pay for spaces.
- Identifying possible venues, promote as part of downtown redevelopment projects, and seek possible funding sources.

Responsible Agencies: Chamber of Commerce, Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Arts Council, Arts Community, property owners

(P) Support and provide incentives to create affordable live/work and studio space.

Responsible Agencies: Chamber of Commerce, Office of Planning and Development

Link creative businesses to business and financial assistance programs.

Responsible Agencies: Chamber of Commerce, Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Valley Community Development Corporation

What Others Say About Us

Highest Commonwealth Capital Score for Smart Growth in the state

"Number One Small Arts Community" – John Villani, 2000

Number One Best Place to Retire – "Cities Ranked & Rated: More Than 400 Metropolitan Areas Evaluated In the U.S. & Canada" Sperling, B. and Sander, P. Wiley Publishing 2007.

"A Dozen Distinctive Destinations" by National Trust for Historic Preservation, April 2001, www.nationaltrust.org/dozen_distinctive_destinations/2001/

"100 Best School Districts in the U.S." by Offspring: The Magazine of Smart Parenting, September/October 2000

"Great Places in America" for Main Street and "Putting Pedestrians First" - American Planning Association, October 2007

Support joint marketing campaigns between cultural, retail, and hospitality sectors.

Responsible Agencies: Chamber of Commerce, Mayor's Office of Economic Development

(P) Create a comprehensive database of businesses and organizations in the Northampton creative economy to determine the local asset base and monitor status. Develop linkages between related enterprises. Create production and distribution mechanisms for creative works and products to increase value and income generation.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, Arts Council, creative organizations and businesses.

Measurement of Progress:

Metric: Trends in number of cultural businesses, organizations, venues, revenue and income generation.

Reporting Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, Local Institutions

Target: Increase commensurate with regional economic growth

Responsibility for Target: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, Local Institutions

See also: Arts and Culture

Goal ED-4: Provide a positive business environment

Objectives:

1. Invest in infrastructure to support desired business development in areas targeted for business growth (e.g., broadband technology, sewer, water, drainage, roadway, parking, and transit).
2. Maintain an appropriate level of environmental and community protection while balancing the impacts of regulation on businesses and major employers and the economic health of the community.
3. Provide a streamlined and transparent permitting process.
4. Support a strong partnership with the Northampton Chamber of Commerce, Village business associations and other regional groups to brand Northampton as a positive business environment.
5. Create a competitive business environment in the City to enable business investment to occur for all levels of businesses, from start-up to corporation.
6. Foster communication and understanding between businesses, government, and residential uses; and recognize business as an integral part of a sustainable community.
7. Provide leadership for local and regional economic development collaborations.

Strategies and Actions:

(P) Convene a group of business owners, institutional leaders, developers and city officials, and stakeholders to facilitate problem solving, and make recommendations for permit streamlining, regulatory simplification, and a customer service approach.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Planning Board, Office of Planning and Development

(P) Participate in the Northeastern University economic development self-assessment tool process and study.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Office of Planning and Development, Chamber of Commerce, other departments as necessary.

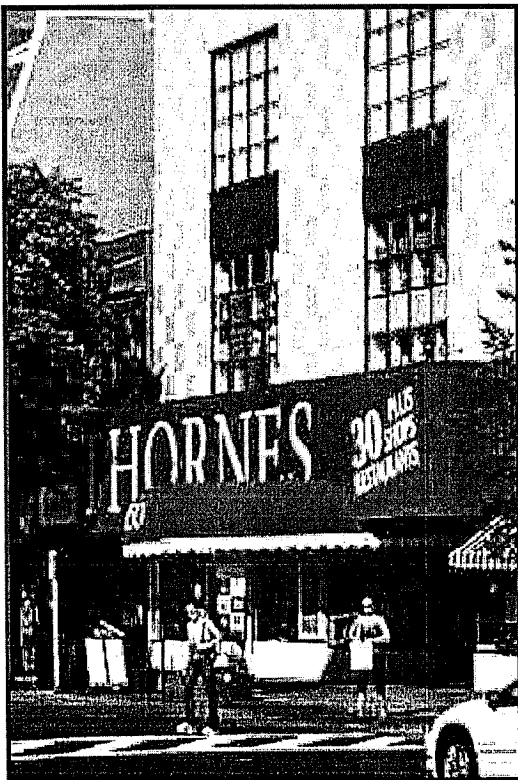
Complete an analysis that assesses consistency and balance between City policies in relation to economic development, other City goals, and financial health of the City including regulations, taxes, and fees.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor, Finance Director, Mayor's Office of Economic Development, All City Departments

Prepare an evaluation on the impact of permits and other fees in retaining and attracting businesses as compared to other communities and in relationship to development achieved.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor, Finance Director, Economic Development Office, Office of Planning and Development

Continue and expand regional economic development collaborations to leverage strengths and effectiveness locally and regionally; i.e.



Pioneer Valley Connect, Plan for Progress, Economic Development Partners, Chamber of Commerce, surrounding communities.

Responsible Agencies: Mayor, Mayor's Office of Economic Development

Measurements of Progress:

Customer Satisfaction

Metric: Business/client satisfaction in dealing with City

Reporting Agencies: All City Departments, Chamber of Commerce

Target: Improved relationships as determined by 'customer' satisfaction

Responsibility for Target: All City Departments, Chamber of Commerce

Regional Impact

Metric: Number of decisions including regional impact assessment

Reporting Agencies: Capital program report by City Council; Land use report by Planning

Target: All decisions consider regional impact

Responsibility for Target: Mayor, City Council

Regional Agreements

Metric: Number of agreements being upheld and enforced

Reporting Agencies: Mayor's office

Target: One new agreement every five years

Responsibility for Target: Mayor's office

Technology Access

Metric: Access to broadband technology and to wireless hot spots.

Reporting Agencies: MIS, Mayor's Office of Economic Development

Target: Competitively priced high speed broadband access to 100% of households and businesses. Wireless access hot spots available in downtown and Florence.

Responsibility for Target: MIS, Mayor's Office of Economic Development

Potential Conflicts:

- Commercial rents continue to rise which attracts investment, but many spaces are no longer affordable to local businesses.
- The need to attract and retain a diversity of employers, especially industrial employers, can be in conflict with the high price of industrial space combined with prohibitive regulations.
- The need for the City to support the expansion of major employers to bring in additional employees, business and visitors to the City consistent with the goals of the *Sustainable Northampton Plan*.
- There is a strong desire for a vibrant downtown but this also raises concerns about problems such as traffic, parking, and panhandling, as well as broader issues of homelessness and drug use.
- There is desire for more commercial development on King Street but differing opinions on how development should take place, such as pedestrian or auto oriented design and uses, mixed residential with commercial or strictly commercial development, and so on.
- The consumer's desire for a broad range of products, services, and pricing can supersede the desire to have primarily local businesses.
- Northampton is perceived as having a vibrant economy, yet the dearth of well-paying jobs causes people to live or work elsewhere. The need for adequate parking for a destination downtown area may conflict with emissions reductions goals.

Potential Responses:

- Providing a positive business environment [ED-4] is an important step towards promoting the presence of healthy local businesses
- Providing the regional leadership [ED-4].
- Maintaining the public properties and policies that support businesses [ED-1, 4] will demonstrate Northampton's commitment to helping businesses thrive. This also becomes a strong marketing point for new businesses looking to locate in Northampton.
- By creating a vibrant, thriving downtown, [ED-1] many of the issues concerning safety, drug use, and panhandling are re-

solved by the presence of large amounts of people, which make the area undesirable for illegal activity.

- Environmental protection and climate change goals seek a reduction in vehicle use and travel which may be encouraged with better parking options that support economic development [ED-1, 4].